

## HEALTH, HYGIENE AND SAFETY STANDARDS FOR PLAYGROUP PROGRAMMES AND PROGRAMMES FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

*All PA Operators (and its Deployed Staff) and PA Trainers must comply with all applicable laws and regulatory requirements. This Annex is issued to complement the applicable laws. In the event of any inconsistency between the applicable laws and this Annex, the applicable laws will prevail.*

### HEALTH

#### (A) Medical Examination of Teaching Staff and Caregivers

- (1) All teaching staff (i.e., teachers) and caregivers must undergo a basic medical examination to certify that they are physically fit for employment before they are allowed to conduct playgroup programmes. Details are provided in the table below:

##### Types and Frequency of Medical Clearances (Before Employment)

Medical Clearance	Frequency
(a) General physical examination	Once only
(b) Chest X-ray	Once only
(c) <b>Blood Test (for antibodies)</b>	Once only
• Measles	
• Mumps	
• Rubella (German Measles)	
• Varicella (Chicken Pox)	
(d) Fit for employment	Once only

A copy of the doctor's certification, X-ray report and all such other requisite information must be maintained in a form prescribed by PA for all teaching staff and caregivers and must be maintained at all times for verification and inspection, when required. Medical form with PA's latest requirements from previous employer (i.e., early childhood industry) will be accepted if the date of their last medical check-up is not more than one year ago.

- (2) Repeated non-compliances of pre-employment medical examination by the PA Operator will be subjected to quality management procedures for PA playgroup programmes which include(s) reduce the number of playgroup centres/and closure of centre(s).
- (3) In line with Ministry of Health (MOH)'s circular, annual influenza vaccination is recommended for all teaching staff and caregivers of children aged five years and below. This is to prevent transmission of influenza from staff to children.

**(B) Health of Teaching Staff and Caregivers**

- (1) Staff must be in good health with no infectious disease.
- (2) Staff must not report for work at the playgroup if they show any signs and symptoms of infectious disease set out in (C)(1) below e.g., severe coughing, runny nose, sore eyes, skin rashes, vomiting, diarrhoea, high fever (at or above 37.5°C), conjunctivitis, etc. In such instances, replacement staff must be arranged.
- (3) Infected staff must only return for work at the playgroup centre upon expiry of their medical certificate and show no symptoms of illness.
- (4) Any signs of ill health must be documented in the centre's record book and maintained by the playgroup operator. The documentation includes the date when they developed the first symptoms of the illness and the clinical diagnosis (if any).
- (5) The above also applies to other staff who help in the playgroup premises/or have contact with children, e.g., cleaners, cooks, bus operators/drivers.

**(C) Handling Sick Children**

- (1) Teaching staff and caregivers must be alert and on the lookout for the following symptoms of all possible infectious diseases, but are not limited to:
  - Fever (37.5°C)
  - severe coughing
  - difficulty in breathing
  - redness of eyes
  - skin rashes (usually blister-like) over hands, feet and diaper area
  - mouth ulcers
  - sore throat
  - runny nose, with yellowish/greenish mucus
  - yellowish skin or eyes
  - frequent scratching of scalp (e.g., head lice) or body
  - vomiting and/or diarrhoea
  - dark, tea-coloured urine
  - grey or pale stools
  - enlarged lymph nodes
  - Other physical symptoms such as poor appetite, lethargy, headache, chills, muscle ache, joint pain, chest pain
- (2) Any signs of ill health must be documented in the centre's record book and maintained by teaching staff and caregivers. The documentation includes the date when they developed the first symptoms of the illness and the clinical diagnosis (if any).

- (3) Parents must be notified immediately when children are sick. Children must be closely monitored until parents arrive. Teaching staff and caregivers must ensure the comfort of the sick child until the arrival of the parents. No sick child is to be left unattended.
- (4) Teaching staff and caregivers must advise parents not to bring their sick child to the playgroup until full recovery or upon expiry of their medical certificate and show no symptoms of illness. In the event that there are differing views on the child's health condition, teaching staff can request from parents a certificate of fitness issued by a medical practitioner to ensure that the child is fit to return to the playgroup.

**(D) Prevention and Control of Infectious Disease**

- (1) Operators must follow and comply with the Infection Prevention Guidelines for Schools (Primary) and Child Care Centres, Third Edition, 2019 issued by the MOH (known as "**MOH Infection Control Guidelines**"). Some of the guidelines are listed below but operators should always refer to the most updated and full set of guidelines found in the MOH website.
- (2) In addition, operators must also comply with any circulars, directives, standards and guidelines, issued by the Early Childhood Development Agency, MOH, other government agencies, and the PA, on issues of health, hygiene, and safety for young children below 7 years old.
- (3) When there is an outbreak of disease, operators, teaching staff and caregivers must step up on strict hygiene practices and by following the detailed MOH guidelines. In addition, they must also strictly comply with any circular issued by other government ministries and the PA on actions to be taken.
- (4) Operators are to immediately notify the Surveillance and Response Branch (Communicable Disease Division, MOH) via the Communicable Diseases Live & Enhanced Surveillance (CDLENS) and the PA through the Residents' Committee (RC)/Residents' Network (RN)/Constituency Office (CO) of any outbreak of infectious diseases at their playgroup.

Definition of infectious disease: any disease caused by an organism (e.g., virus, bacteria, fungus) that is capable of producing infection. Please refer to Infection Prevention Guidelines for Schools (Primary) and Child Care Centres, Third Edition, 2019 issued by the MOH.

[Examples of infectious disease: Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (HFMD), Measles, Mumps, Gastroenteritis, Respiratory Illnesses, Rubella (German measles), Tuberculosis]

- (5) Operators and teaching staff must conduct intensive daily health checks. Teaching staff and caregivers must carry out temperature check and screen all the children upon arrival for symptoms of the infectious disease. They should also look out for bruises or signs of child abuse, and mosquito bites.

- (6) Unwell children must be isolated immediately (but within the supervision of a staff) while waiting to be fetched home.
- (7) Teachers and caregivers must quickly contact the parents to bring the child to see a doctor immediately for medical attention and assessment.
- (8) Infected children must only return to the playgroup upon expiry of their medical certificate and show no symptoms of illness. In the event that there are differing views on the child's health condition, teaching staff can request from parents or guardians a certificate of fitness issued by a medical practitioner to ensure that the child is fit to return to the playgroup.
- (9) A child who is receiving antibiotics and medication for fever can continue to attend the playgroup. In addition, children receiving medication for non-infectious conditions such as asthma or diabetes may be admitted to the playgroup, as these diseases are not contagious.
- (10) Teaching staff and caregivers with symptoms of the infectious disease should immediately stop teaching and seek immediate medical care. They must only return to the playgroup centre upon expiry of their medical certificate and show no symptoms of illness.

## **HYGIENE – FACILITIES & EQUIPMENT**

### **(A) Activity Area**

- (1) Floor must be mopped daily/before each playgroup session using disinfectant and dried before use (1 part of bleach with 50 parts water).
- (2) Carpeted flooring must be vacuumed before use. The carpet should be professionally cleaned once in six months. A big mat should be provided in the activity area.
- (3) No footwear should be allowed in the playgroup classroom.
- (4) Air-con filters should be checked once in three months.

### **(B) Toilet**

- (1) A potty and/or child toilet seat should be on standby and should be kept out of reach of the children.
- (2) Use of potty chairs are discouraged under the MOH Infection Control Guidelines. However, if potty chairs are used, the contents of the potty must be emptied into the toilet. The potty should then be rinsed, cleaned and disinfected with diluted household bleach (1 part of bleach with 49 parts water). The toilet seats must also be disinfected after each playgroup session.
- (3) Faucet handles of basin should be washed regularly.

- (4) The floor must be dry at all times.
- (5) Children must have easy access to liquid soap, not bar soap, for washing hands. Liquid soap solution must not be diluted and must be effective for hand washing.
- (6) Sufficient supply of toilet rolls must be provided at all times and within easy reach. The toilet paper must be replenished.
- (7) Only single use disposable tissues/towels are to be provided for drying hands.

**(C) Tables/Chairs/Mats**

- (1) Tables and chairs must be wiped and disinfected daily with household bleach diluted 1 part of bleach with 49 parts of water, before the start of each playgroup session and after use (when food and drinks are provided or when tables and chairs are dirty).
- (2) When a mat is provided and used by children for activities, it should be wiped before and after each use with a wet cloth and disinfectant. The mat provided should be one that can be easily cleaned with a wet cloth.

**(D) Pantry Area or Area of Food Preparation**

- (1) Surfaces for food preparation should be cleaned before and after use.
- (2) Rubbish bins must be lined with disposable plastic bags and covered.

**(E) Toys and Other Shared Items**

- (1) Toys and other items shared among children must be cleaned and disinfected after each playgroup session.
- (2) Non-washable toys and stuffed toys must not be used because they are difficult to clean when soiled.
- (3) Soiled toys (with vomit, urine, faeces, blood) must be thrown away immediately.

**HYGIENE - PRACTICES**

**(A) Hand Washing**

- (1) Staff and children must observe proper and regular handwashing using liquid soap. They should dry their hands with disposable tissues/paper towels after washing.
- (2) Teaching staff and caregivers must wash their hands with soap and water and

then dried:

- (a) when they arrive upon arrival at the centre;
- (b) when they prepare or serve food (if any);
- (c) after they change diapers, clean up or wipe the nose of a child;
- (d) after contact with blood or body fluids;
- (e) after they have been to the toilet, either with a child or by themselves;
- (f) after outdoor activities (e.g., playing with children in the playground)

(3) Children must wash their hands:

- (a) when they arrive at the centre;
- (b) before they eat or drink;
- (c) after they use the toilet;
- (d) after outdoor activities (e.g., playing with children in the playground)

Alcohol-based hand rubs can be used routinely however the safety issues, including inflammability, skin reaction and student access to the product (i.e., ingestion) must be considered. Further, hands must be clean (free of debris) if hand rubs are to be effective for infection control. Alcohol-based hand rubs may also be used in emergency or field situations (such as excursions, camps or off-campus activities) where hand washing facilities are limited or not available.

## **(B) Use of Gloves**

Staff must wear disposable gloves (gloves should be powder-free latex or vinyl) and plastic aprons when handling clothes soiled with urine, faeces, vomit or blood.

## **(C) Soiled Clothing**

Clothing soiled with urine or stool is to be rinsed at the centre. It should be done in a pail designated for this purpose in the centre. The soiled clothing should be packed in plastic bags to minimize exposure of staff and children to disease-carrying agents. Hands should be washed after handling soiled clothing. (Please refer to MOH's guidelines on the handling of soiled clothing).

## **(D) Diapering**

Sanitary procedures for changing diapers must be well established and implemented at all times. Soiled diapers must be wrapped in a plastic bag, tied securely before being discarded into a plastic-lined foot-operated lid bin which is emptied and cleaned daily.

## **(E) General Surfaces**

- (1) Low shelves, doorknobs and other surfaces often touched by children must be cleaned and disinfected regularly.
- (2) All blood and body fluids spills must be cleaned up immediately. The soiled

surface must be cleaned then disinfected with diluted household bleach (1 part bleach to 9 parts water) in accordance with the MOH Infection Prevention Guidelines.

- (3) Mops and equipment used to clean up blood and body fluids must be soaked with detergent after use, rinsed thoroughly and dried in an open area. The water must be promptly disposed into a drainpipe.

**(F) Food Preparation and Consumption (if any)**

- (1) Provision of food is highly discouraged at the playgroup centres. Notwithstanding the above, if the need arises for food to be provided PA Operators must ensure that:
  - (a) if food is catered or bought, the food must be bought or catered from a source licensed by the Singapore Food Agency; or
  - (b) if food is cooked or prepared in house by the PA Operator staff, the staff responsible for the preparation and handling of food must have obtained a Basic Food Hygiene Course Certificate with training institutions approved by the Singapore Food Agency before being assigned with food preparation duties.
- (2) Staff and parents are strongly discouraged from bringing home-cooked food for the children as prolonged storage of food could increase the risk of food poisoning and food allergies.
- (3) Staff with sores or cuts on their hands must cover them with waterproof plasters and wear disposable waterproof gloves when handling food.
- (4) Food should be covered to prevent contamination. Bare hands should not be used to handle food (Please refer to the Singapore Food Agency's guidelines on food hygiene).
- (5) Staff with diarrhoea, fever or any other symptoms of food-borne diseases should not be allowed to work and handle food or feed children.

**(G) Personal Effects**

PA Operators must ensure that children do not share personal effects like handkerchiefs, towels and water bottles.

**SAFETY**

**(A) First Aid Certificate by Teaching Staff/Caregivers**

- (1) There must be at least one staff with a valid child first aid certificate at the centre at all times. Please refer to the minimum qualifying standards. Operators are encouraged to send all staff for the child first aid course.

- (2) Operators are to ensure that staff are sent for a refresher course before the expiry of the child first aid certificate.

**(B) Telecommunications**

- (1) Each playgroup must have ready access to telecommunications devices, e.g., telephones and handphones.
- (2) The contact numbers of the playgroup supervisors must be made available to parents, RC/RN and staff in the Constituency Office (CO), in case of action to be taken during an emergency.
- (3) Contact numbers of parents, authorized guardians, and the CO must also be kept by the playgroup staff.

**(C) Teacher-To-Child Ratio**

- (1) Each playgroup session must have at least teaching staff/caregivers at all times. At least one of them must be a teaching staff.

The following teacher-to-child ratios must be met at all times to ensure adequate supervision, care and good teacher-child interaction.

Age (based on the birth year of the child)	Group Size	Teacher-child ratio
Above 18 months to 3 years	1 child to 16 children	2 teaching staff (i.e., teachers) OR 1 teaching staff (i.e., teacher) and 1 caregiver
	17 to 24 children	3 teaching staff (i.e., teachers) OR 2 teaching staff (i.e., teachers) and 1 caregiver (the children should be grouped into 3 groups as the class size is relatively large).

- (2) All teaching staff and caregivers must be alert at all times to prevent any accident from happening.

**(D) Floor Area**

Every playgroup centre with operation of 6 hours or less shall have a minimum of 1.88 square metres of usable floor space for each child enrolled. The usable floor space would include the indoor activity area and exclude the service areas. This is to avoid overcrowding, which reduces the risk of accidents and spread of infectious diseases.

**(E) Dangerous Materials and Substances**

- (1) All chemicals, cleaning products, any other dangerous substances must be

properly stored away in closed cabinets or stored in areas where the children have no access to. Dangerous objects such as knives, thorny or poisonous plants should not be accessible to children.

- (2) All power points have to be raised above the children's reach, or covered with sturdy dummy plugs that the children cannot remove.
- (3) Playgroups using extension cords for power supply must ensure that they are not accessible and do not pose a potential safety hazard to the children.
- (4) Sharp-edged furniture must be padded.
- (5) There should be no heavy stacked-up items in the room that would collapse when people were to shake them or knock into them.
- (6) Resources, furnishings and equipment used must be age-appropriate and safe. A suggested guide is provided in the accompanying pages.

#### **ESSENTIAL HEALTH, HYGIENE & SAFETY ITEMS**

##### **(A) First Aid Box**

- (1) The facility needs to maintain at least one first aid box at a convenient location for the staff but out of children's reach.
- (2) The first aid box must contain all the essential items listed in the accompanying page. These items should be within the manufacturer's stated use date, replaced and replenished when necessary.

Operators are to work with the CC Management Committees (CCMCs), RC/RN or the CO to ensure that essential health, hygiene and safety items are readily available, stored properly and in good working order. A list of these essential items is provided in the accompanying page.

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**ESSENTIAL ITEMS FOR THE FIRST AID BOX**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>ITEMS</b>	<b>QUANTITY</b>
1	Sterile cotton wool balls	2 packs
2	Emergency eye wash (Saline 10cc vials, distilled water)	4 vials
3	Dressing forceps and powder free latex gloves or vinyl gloves	1 set
4	Sterile absorbent-gauze (min 5 pieces/pack)	6 packs
5	Hypoallergenic tape for the bandages	1 roll
6	Adhesive dressing (first aid plasters)	20 pieces (various sizes)
7	Crepe bandages (5 cm)	3 packs
8	Triangular bandages with safety pins	3 packs
9	Scissors (Dressing scissors or normal round headed scissors)	1 pair
10	Torch light with battery	1 piece
11	Ziploc bags	2 pieces
12	Resuscitation mask	1 piece

## **SUGGESTED AGE-APPROPRIATE RESOURCES, FURNISHINGS AND EQUIPMENT**

### **General**

- (1) Child-sized tables and chairs/PVC bean-bag cushions
- (2) Storage bins
- (3) Stationery
- (4) Light-weight trays
- (5) Soft boards/magnetic white board (at children's eye level) & markers
- (6) Jigsaw puzzle foam mats/soft washable mats
- (7) Paper towel dispenser
- (8) Soap dispenser (preferably wall-mounted)
- (9) Toilet roll holder

### **Gross Motor Activity**

- (1) Push-and-pull toys
- (2) Safe-riding toys
- (3) Bean bags, hoops
- (4) Balls
- (5) Balance beam, small slide
- (6) Multi-purpose climbing frame
- (7) Suitable surface for children to be involved in 'rough and tumble'.

### **Music and Movement**

- (1) Musical instruments
- (2) CD/cassette player
- (3) Piano/guitar

### **Interest Corners (e.g., Dramatic Corner)**

- (1) Toy telephones
- (2) Pots & pans
- (3) Plastic containers & pails
- (4) Barn and farm animals
- (5) Transport toys
- (6) Tea set
- (7) A set of different hats
- (8) Construction toys
- (9) Plastic fruits & vegetables
- (10) Combs

### **Manipulative**

- (1) 3-dimensional puzzles
- (2) Easy wooden puzzles
- (3) Stacking toys
- (4) Threading equipment

**Block and Vehicle Corner**

- (1) A set of big foam blocks
- (2) Toy vehicles

Note: For safety reasons, operators should refrain from buying toys that are imitations and of poor quality.

**Art**

- (1) Easel boards, paintbrushes
- (2) Poster colours, crayons (should be non-toxic and safe for children)
- (3) Pencils, rulers, sharpeners
- (4) Scissors (child-sized) – Include provision of special scissors for children who are left-handed
- (5) Glue, scotch-tapes
- (6) Colour paper, crepe paper
- (7) Scrap materials, e.g., egg cartons

**Language**

- (1) Age-appropriate books
- (2) Flannel board
- (3) Picture charts
- (4) Ringer puppets/hand puppets

**Numeracy**

- (1) Shape toys
  - (2) Big wooden beads
  - (3) Rulers
  - (4) Measuring tapes
  - (5) Weights & balances
  - (6) Alphabet/number blocks
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**ESSENTIAL HEALTH, HYGIENE AND SAFETY ITEMS**

<b>(A)</b>	<b>Health Items</b>
	A first-aid kit that contains up-to-date first-aid items.
<b>(B)</b>	<b>Hygiene Items</b>
1	Cleaning Tools: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pail for mopping floor (with lid to squeeze water from mop)</li> <li>• Mop</li> <li>• Detergents</li> <li>• Disinfectant</li> </ul>
2	Toilet rolls
3	Single use disposable tissues/towels
4	Tissue box
5	Liquid soap for hand washing
6	Litter bin, lined with disposable plastic bags
7	Plastic bags for putting soiled clothing
8	Disposable gloves
9	Potty/child toilet seat
<b>(C)</b>	<b>Safety Items</b>
1	Child-safe devices to cushion sharp edges
2	Fire extinguisher